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The Reformed Journal

A PERIODICAL OF REFORMED COMMENT AND OPINION

The Mind of the Church (I)

By HENRY STOB

Theological Training in Nigeria

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By JESSE DEBOER

Pages From the Past

THE EDITORS

Book Review and Letters

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THE MIND OF THE CHURCH
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THEOLOGICAL TRAINING IN NORTHERN NIGERIA
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NOTES ON THE LOGIC OF THEOLOGICAL LANGUAGE
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PAGES FROM THE PAST
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BOOK REVIEW

LETTERS TO THE JOURNAL

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The Mind of the Church

by Henry Stob

THE APPROACH of the one hundredth birthday of ıe Christian Reformed Church is driving many of er sons and daughters to reflection and appraisal. everal excellent articles calculated to produce bet- r understanding and to provide us with a meaning- ıl perspective upon the forthcoming Centennial ave already been produced by such reflection, and me of them have appeared in this *Journal.* When ow I add to the constantly swelling volume of ords devoted to the Church about to enter its sec- nd century, I do so in the consciousness that I can ıy little that has not already been well said by hers. Yet there is that little, and this article is n attempt to say it.

As has been frequently said in these last months, hat we need at this stage of our existence, besides ratitude to God for his many and remarkable mer- es and besides a fuller surrender to His wise di- ection, is a better understanding of ourselves. elf-knowledge is always needful, and it is never ıore so than when, as now, we are moving over a reshhold into a new century of opportunity and hallenge. It is in our tradition to value such knowl- dge. It was not only the Greek Socrates who ounselled us to know ourselves, it was the Chris- an Augustine who also did, and after him it was ıe Reforming Fathers, and chiefly Calvin. Indeed ieir counsel was fuller and more apt than that of ocrates, because they recognized, as Socrates did ot, that no proper knowledge of self is possible to man to whom God is not disclosed. Augustine aid: "God and the Soul I desire to know, nothing ıore," and Calvin echoed: "True and substantial isdom principally consists of two parts, the knowl- dge of God and the knowledge of ourselves." It s in accordance with this insight that I propose we ake another look at ourselves.

What I more particularly propose is that we onsider the theologico-ethical structure of our ex- stence, or, if you please, the spirituo-moral com- lexion of our life. Our Church, like every other, as a "character," a "personality," a "mind." As ith all things in history, however, this mind or ersonality is not fixed. It is, rather, in flux. It s an emerging mind, a mind in evolution. Our haracter is not settled; our personality is not es- ablished. Our mind is in process, and like all things o situated it is as much an aggregate of many and liverse minds as it is a single integrated one. It s, so to speak, a mind in tension, embracing not ndeed contradictions (which would make it schizo- phrenic) but yet contrarieties and polarities which impart to it its characteristically erratic movements. It is these movements, these oscillations of a growing mind in tension, which produce in the life of the Church those "disturbances" which sometimes vex us, but which may signify nothing more than that we are alive and growing, that we are engaged in producing out of relatively heterogeneous elements a bigger and more significant mind and personality than at present we possess.

In this and in a succeeding article I shall attempt to isolate a few of the elements that are in the crucible: I shall try to define a few of the disparate "minds" whose diverse expressions ruffle the surface of our corporate life, but whose disparateness vanishes at a point below the surface where, as I believe, a basic identity exists in a common loyalty to a common Lord. I shall not embrace within this analysis, and for no other reason than that I have not the resources for doing so, that considerable people which has lately come to join us from across the sea. It is hazardous enough to appraise a situation in which one has been born and nurtured; it is folly to appraise from a distance a "Canadian" situation which in important ways is "foreign" to our own, and which, moreover, has hardly settled into even an initial identity. It is not then in depreciation of the significance of our immigrant brothers and sisters, but only in recognition of my own limitations, that I leave them out of purview and limit myself to that segment of the Church whose identity was achieved during the greater portion of the last one hundred years.

I must remark that I am not insensitive to the hazards of the task I here undertake. I shall be talking about the Church which is the mother of us all. Only the bold and calloused undertake to do this gladly or carelessly. In consideration of this fact I have been tempted more than once to abandon the effort or, alternatively, to shift the discussion onto the plane of innocuous abstractions where, because issues are evaded, offenses can be avoided. I have resisted the temptation, however, in the conviction that plain talk, honestly conducted, can never harm, and that plain talk, under God, is calculated as nothing else is to help us discover ourselves, and in that discovery to find each other.

A discussion of this sort must, I am aware, be responsibly conducted; it must, that is, be based on sober analysis and be carried on in love. I dare

not assert that I have met this responsibility. I can only declare that I have tried to be objective and to observe the bonds of charity. But it is not likely that I have entirely succeeded. A man cannot divorce himself from himself. His representations and evaluations will carry upon them the mark of his own mind and heart, and will reflect his own commitment and perspective. You are warned therefore to remember that what you hear from me about the Church is only one man's view of it. I think, of course, that it is in its general thrust and bearing the true view, else I should not now be holding and expressing it, but I do not think it is absolute or at important points incontrovertible. And I expect and desire that, in the interest of mutual instruction, you will freely question and challenge it.

It is a pleasure to record that whatever different local perspectives may be in vogue among us, that whatever relatively different attitudes we may take up, that whatever different mentalities we may possess, there is among us, and specifically among our guides and teachers, a basic agreement respecting the fundamentals of our faith. Our shared commitment is to Biblical Christianity as that is delineated in the Reformed creeds. We are bound in a common loyalty to Christ as He is understood in His person, words, and works in our formulas of unity. Our theological thought and constructions are unmistakably orthodox in character.

This no one, as far as I know, seriously doubts. Few if any of the polemical writings of the last few decades have accused a brother of departing significantly from the creeds. The charge of heresy has not been made, or not publicly and substantially made. Some have been accused of failing to understand the full import of what they confess, others have been charged with neglecting a truth which they were known in theory to acknowledge, still others have been thought guilty of placing undue emphasis on some special and favorite doctrine, and some have been thought to be careless in their choice of terms and expressions, but none has been observed to abandon the deep and sound core of our common faith.

It is true that out of the smoke surrounding the so-called "Seminary Situation" in 1951-1952 there came whispers of a design to substitute the theology of Barth for that of Calvin, but this proved upon investigation to be completely without foundation, and since that time no responsible leader in the Church has pointed a loaded finger at another. For this we must be deeply thankful. We must be thankful, that is, not that no accusation has been made, but that in view of continued fidelity to the histo Christian faith, no accusation was called for deserved. Herein the mercy of the Lord is ma fest.

This does not mean, of course, that as bles possessors we inhabit a kind of theological Ed The Church has not succumbed to Modernism has not moved in Barth's direction, and it has yielded at the core at least to the blandishments Fundamentalism, but it is not immune to these, a it has not developed its own theology to the po where it can challenge these with maximum fo and relevancy. We are orthodox, but our ort doxy is not vibrantly challenging; our theology right, but it is not electric. This is said in disp agement of no one person, or of no one group persons. It is said in rebuke of all of us, or least of those of us who stand under the obligat to teach and preach, who are obliged not only preserve but also to develop truth, and who called to proclaim this truth not in esoteric langu but in the idiom of the age and with direct addr to contemporary problems.

Both our theological activity and our theolog witness is weaker than it should be. The reas why this is so, and the measures required to rem the situation, it is not now my purpose to disc I am concerned now only to observe that one in pensable condition of theological effectiveness found among us — a willingness to bow before Word and a determination to build upon the foun tion of the fathers. In this willingness and de mination we are one. Here, and in our central legiances, we stand firmly in the bond of unity

It is a fact, however, that our common fa fulness to Scripture and Confession is dive fied by different slants or accents. There different ways in which we "hold" our shared liefs. There are in the Christian Reformed Chu I dare say, at least three distinguishable "Min "Mentalities," or "Perspectives," all of them bracing a common fund of truth, but each of th distributing the emphasis upon that truth in a ferent way, thus creating those polarities and sions within our common life which are open to observation of us all.

These three "minds," rising up out of the b of the Church and seeking to express its life nature, are not to be thought of as allocated to th distinct groups or "parties," each of which is patron and custodian of a single mind and each which is engaged in an all-out war with the patr of the other two. These three "minds" are in all. Each of us, in so far as we are living mem of the Church and therefore genuine exponents

ts developing life, exhibits in his own person the hree minds which are struggling for articulation within the confines of our relatively heterogeneous ellowship.

It is true, of course, that in each of us one or he other of these minds is "dominant," but from one of us is any one of them completely absent. n this fact lies the secret both of the hold we have n one another and of the differences that sometimes rise between us. None of us is completely foreign o the "mind" or "perspective" of any of our fellows, and this, together with our common commitment to the Christ, cements agreement both at the lepth and upon the surface of our communal life. On the other hand, none of us is really able in the ong run to endorse all three of these minds. As minds," *i.e.*, as "total outlooks" or "governing perpectives," they exclude each other, and one of them nust eventually be chosen and seated as king. Personal wholeness and integrity demands this choice.

When the choice is made, however, or when, as ometimes happens, the choice is made for us, we vill naturally seek to make dominant in the Church he single mind that dominates our person, the mind n terms of which we believe the Christian truth we hare with our fellows can best be viewed and construed. It is at this point that we will be put into reat temptation. We will be tempted, in the course f our effort to make our "mind" and "outlook" prevail, to assemble the "like-minded" and organize hem into a party. We will then be tempted to prepare a program which by concerted action and with ull use of the available power-techniques we will eek to actualize, and thus chart the Church's ourse. Sincerely believing that the mind we have hosen should govern the Church we will be tempted to impose it through the machinery of force.

It goes without saying that this temptation must e resisted unto death. There is no room in the Church for parties, sects, or cliques resplendent in he panoply of power. It is not by organization and propaganda, but by discussion and persuasion that single mind is made to prevail in the Church. That ne should seek to have his outlook prevail is natural and proper, and that he should welcome the ssistance of all those who share his outlook is qually so, but he must always be testing whether is "mind" is the mind of Christ, and whether his methods" are those that God can bless. The methods he employs should be chosen indeed for their fficacy in eliciting the singleness of mind he believes the Church should possess, but their nature nd employment should be such that they tend to preserve the fellowship while integrating and maturing it.

MEANWHILE three minds exist in the Church, modifying each other while they press their claims against each other and strive for the hegemony. What are these "minds" and how are they defined?

These minds or "mentalities" can best be discerned in their variety by contemplating them as giving answers to the question: "What is the relation of the Christian to the world?", or better: "How can we be Christian in the world?", or again: "How does a Christian act relative to the world?", or finally: "How do we maintain truth and piety within the world?". This is, you see, the age-old question, which every generation of Christians must face anew because it lies at the very center of the Christian ethic: How can I, not being *of* the world, yet live *in* the world?

Deep down there are only two, not three, answers to this question, because deep down there are only two attitudes we can assume toward the world: a positive and a negative attitude. Those two attitudes, it will be observed, do not absolutely exclude each other, for there is that in the world which must be affirmed and there is that which must be denied. These two attitudes can therefore, and indeed should, coexist in one person and, by that token, in one Church. But, from the nature of the case, one or the other of these attitudes must take the "lead," and whichever does this qualifies and determines the other, and gives to the person assuming these attitudes his characteristic and defining "mind" or "bent." He in whom the positive attitude toward the world takes the lead comes to possess a different "mind" than he in whom the negative attitude dominates. What is important here is the matter of priority. What counts is emphasis or accent. The "mind" formed by a negative accent differs importantly from the "mind" formed by the alternate emphasis. They are two very distinct minds.

These two minds exist in the Christian Reformed Church. What I shall henceforth call the positive mind, from which negative responses are not excluded, stands toward the world in the token of "love"; whereas the negative mind, from which affirmative responses are not excluded, stands toward the world in the token of "fear." Love (not without fear) forms one mind; fear (not without love) forms the other.

But because of the ambivalence of the negative attitude, because of the duality of the fear-response, there are really three, and not merely two, minds in the Church. A predominantly negative or fearful attitude toward the world requires the adoption of a defensive stances. But defense can take two

The Mind of the Church — Continued

forms. It can take the form of withdrawal or the form of aggression. One may flee the world one fears, or one may launch an attack upon it. One may play "safe," or one may become "militant." In either case it is security that is primarily sough and not positive outreach and redemptive action

Three minds then — the safe, the militant, ar the positive — operate out of and upon the Churc and shape her complex personality. I shall attem in the April *Journal* to characterize each.

Theological Training in Northern Nigeri

by Harry R. Boer

WHEN WE DISCUSS theological education in Northern Nigeria it is of the greatest importance to keep in mind the political divisions of the country. Nigeria forms, roughly speaking, a square of which the upper two-thirds constitutes what is called the Northern Region. The lower or southern third is divided about equally between the Western Region and the Eastern Region.

The geographical imbalance is paralleled by the difference obtaining among the respective populations of the regions. The West has a population of about 7,000,000, the East of about 8,000,000, and the North of about 19,000,000 people. In the Eastern and Western Regions Christianity is strongly entrenched. In the former the 1953 census recorded 3,915,432 Christians, roughly one half of the population. For the West, where Christianity first entered, I have no figures, but the situation would presumably not be very different. In the Eastern Region there are only about 60,000 Mohammedans. In the western part of the Western Region there are many thousands more, but even so Christianity has placed a marked stamp on the whole of the area.

In the North, in which the whole of the Sudan United Mission is active, the situation is almost the reverse of that obtaining in the southern part of the country. There the population includes about 12,000,000 Moslems (more than any other country in Africa save Egypt), about 7,000,000 pagans, and approximately 300,000 Christians. The latter figure includes both Protestants and Roman Catholics. The former, however, are overwhelmingly in the majority.

The Christians are scattered from east to west in the southern section of this huge region. The Protestants are divided among some fifteen different churches, no one of which is numerically a "strong" church. Six of them are affiliated with the Federation of Churches of Christ in the Sudan, five being churches that have grown out of the work of the five branches of the Sudan United Mission and the sixth the church that has been brought in being by the Church of the Brethren.

That a great task confronts the Church in Nort ern Nigeria is self-evident. Her first task, human speaking, is that of securing her own surviv She is an island surrounded by a sea of Moha medanism and paganism. Although it may be sa that the Church in the North has been establishe it would be hazardous to say that she is not in a danger. Her second task is to extend her borde through an aggressive missionary and evangelis outreach. These two tasks cannot be separat from each other except in idea. The one is giv with the other.

CHANGING NIGERIA

The changing situation in Northern Nigeria a in the country as a whole confronts the Chur with the inescapable necessity of theological tra ing. As short as ten years ago there was but lit English being taught in the North, and seconda education was virtually non-existent. The affa of the country, economically as well as politica were still almost entirely in the hands of white m Today all this has changed. Secondary educat has not only been established; it is growing by le and bounds. No one who does not speak Engl can hope to find a position with any promise advancement. In 1959 the country expects to come politically independent. Nigeria's future soon, so to speak, be in her own hands.

It is remarkable to see how here in the North people have responded to the challenge. There a will to work and to understand, and in every st of any size, in garages, hospitals, offices, even the market places, you will find men able to do b iness with you in English.

There is one place in Northern Nigeria which or ought to be of central importance in the life the community and of the Church, and in this p it is safe to assume that you will not be able speak English. That is the average parsonage.

ll the areas of endeavor in the life of Northern Nieria there is perhaps none that lags so far behind ı meeting the new situation as the Church does n the score of theological training. This would eem to be a strange situation. Northern Nigeria ould not begin to be where it is educationally and ı many other ways were it not for missionary nitiative. Yet a central purpose for which missions exist, namely, the training of the ministry, is mong the last to be served by the educational arm f the missions.

This does not mean that the churches and the issions have been indifferent to the need of trainıg leaders for the Church. It must be remembered nat there must first be a relatively well educated adre of men before ministerial training can be ndertaken. Such a cadre is now beginning to come nto being. We must therefore lose no time in getng started. Moreover, a number of missions inluding the Christian Reformed have prepared or re preparing men for the ordained ministry in the ernacular. This work has been and will for a numer of years to come be an invaluable and indispensble part of the training of church leaders. But his training, necessary though it may be, cannot neet the total situation. That will be evident when e consider the following.

The Need for Theological Training

Neither in Hausa nor in any of the other lanuages of the North is there any theological literture to speak of. There are pamphlets and some ooks of various usefulness, but the basic literary ools of the minister — to mention only these — are otally wanting. There is no concordance, there re no Bible dictionaries or encyclopedias, no comentaries, sermon helps, or books on doctrine, thics, liturgics, church history or homiletics. In hort, there is as good as nothing so far as the inister's basic study needs are concerned. How s the Church to grow spiritually when those who ust nourish her are cut off from the literary fruits f the work of the Spirit in days gone by?

That this situation is unfortunate, that it should e changed, that the missions should become more ctive on the literary front, no one will dispute. Ve cannot, however, wait for this situation to hange. The need for helping the ministry to disharge its task more effectively must be met now. his can only be done by instituting theological raining on the higher educational level that is now eginning to obtain in this country. That is to say, e must train men who will be able to transmit to heir people in the various vernaculars spiritual iches gleaned from the study of English books.

In the second place, the percentage of educated oung people in the churches is constantly increasng. At the present time a boy who has gone hrough the Nigerian equivalent of the eighth grade has achieved a higher academic standing than nine out of ten evangelists or ministers in the North. Moreover, the growing generation has its own kind of problems — intellectual, spiritual and moral — which in the long run cannot be met either in the pulpit or in pastoral care by the less educated ministry. If the churches of the North are to retain their young people it is imperative that there come into being a ministry that can speak to them and for them.

Finally, the Church cannot permit leadership in other fields far to outstrip her own leadership. She cannot permit nearly all her ministerial leaders to be men who are lost as soon as they move outside the familiar local and church circles. Nigeria is today in a state of terrific transition on all fronts. What is the message of the Church in this situation? How shall she command the respect of educated and reflecting men? The Church may not be permitted to become a "bush" church. She must stand in the center — in the very heart and center — of the national life and there speak her message of reconciliation in direct relevance to the life that surges around her.

How to meet this growing need has been a subject of serious discussion in mission circles since 1950. Particularly the Northern Missions Council, representing eleven missions in the North, gave its attention to the problem. Matters did not, however, advance beyond the discussion stage. In 1954 two branches of the Sudan United Mission, the British branch and the Sudan Mission of the Christian Reformed Church, took direct action. They contacted the present writer and asked whether he would be willing to come to Nigeria to give full time to the work of theological education. This initiative led to his appointment by the synod of the Christian Reformed Church in June, 1955, to serve in Nigeria, in connection with the Sudan United Mission, in the area of theological training.

Plan For a Theological School

Out of reading what has been done about theological training on other mission fields, discussions with mission, church, and educational leaders, and visits to the theological schools in the Eastern and Western Regions, a plan has evolved of which the following are the salient points:

1. A school should be established which will offer two courses entitled the Diploma Course and the Certificate Course. The former will be for men who have finished the higher course of teacher training as it obtains here in Northern Nigeria, or who have a secondary school certificate (a bit beyond American high school), or who can pass an entrance examination indicating that they are able to do the work required at this level.

The Certificate Course will be for men who have passed the lower course of teacher training or

Theological Training — Continued

whose academic competence is about the equivalent of the tenth grade of high school, or who can pass an entrance examination showing that they are able to do the work required at this level.

These entrance requirements, even on the higher level, must seem absurdly low when compared with European or American standards for entry into a recognized theological school. As education obtains in this country, however, the Diploma Course will stand at a very high level and will bring into the school, insofar as they shall have a call from God to come, the cream of Northern Nigerian educated Christian young men. Moreover, it is expected that men who are already teaching will be the main ones to respond to the call for theological training. These are generally men with families and with several years of teaching experience. They would compare favorably in knowledge with college freshmen or sophomores and would certainly exceed them in general wisdom and life experience.

The Certificate Course will stand at a considerably lower academic level, but even so it will train men who so far as schooling is concerned will be far superior to those who are now in the ministry. They will be introduced at a simple level to the basic disciplines and through this instruction they will have made available to them the large stores of spiritual and theological riches in the English language that will be within their intellectual reach.

When the educational level of the country as a whole rises, it may be expected that the lower course will be eliminated and the Diploma Course will become the lower as higher entrance standards can be set. At all events, no change in the structure of the school is contemplated as it strives onward and upward to take its place as a full theological seminary beside ministerial training centers in other countries.

2. It was thought at first that the school would be situated at Gindiri, the large educational training center of the S. U. M. (British branch). It has now generally been conceded that the school would in this way not be able really to enter into its own, and that it should therefore be built on a separate site where it will have full opportunity for development in terms of its own nature and purpose. An initial building program of about $70,000 has been tentatively accepted as the goal for the first stage of the physical development of the school.

3. Although the school will hopefully begin with a faculty of three, it is expected that before long it will have a faculty of six in order to do the work required. If present plans carry we will really have two schools in one institution. The Diploma Course will probably be three years in length, the Certificate Course four years. When the school is fully under way, therefore, there will be seven different year levels to instruct. Without adequate personn this cannot be properly done.

4. It is expected that the school will open i doors in 1959 with a small student group. W shall probably spend the first year or two at Gindi while the erection of buildings proceeds on the ne site. Building progress will of course depend on t manner in which the home churches support th enterprise. No real growth of the school will able to take place at Gindiri. The available fac ities are too limited. The average initial contrib tion asked of each participating mission is $10,0 over a period of three years. The Christian R formed Church has never been slow to support a work directly associated with evangelism and I a confident that our church will give a good accou of herself here.

5. Although students coming from varic churches will follow a common curriculum, th will also be instructed in the distinctive traditi that has been mediated to them by the missions o of whose work their churches have come. For th reason it has been stipulated in the draft plan the school that "those churches and missions wh desire special instruction for their students in t tradition of the church concerned will give this truction through their faculty representative, t instruction to be given in a manner and degree th will be compatible with the demands of the c riculum common to the entire student body."

The foregoing five points set forth the main fe tures of the school as it has been accepted on t field, subject to home base approval. There is alternative to this plan. It is an alternative wh no mission and no church in the North has be willing to entertain. The alternative is the compl fragmentation of theological training in North Nigeria.

The Framework of Co-operation

The seven missions which are submitting plan to their home boards and the seven churc which are acting upon it in their several chu councils are not an arbitrary group gathered gether for a purpose which has no larger cont of common interest. This will be evident when consider the existing relationships *missionarily* a *ecclesiastically*.

The missions concerned are the five missi associated with the Sudan United Mission, Dutch Reformed Church Mission, and the Chu of the Brethren Mission. To all of these we as Sudan Mission of the Christian Reformed Chu sustain intimate ties.

Our mission does not operate independently in Sudan. We have from the beginning been an act member in the federation of missions known as Sudan United Mission. In such important aspe of mission work as relationships with the gove

ıent, education, Bible translation, literature, meetngs for fellowship, the sponsoring of church oranization, comity arrangements, instruction of vangelists, and travel arrangements we do now or ave at various times in the past worked closely toether. Moreover, the headquarters at Jos are a ource of constant help to us in large ways and mall.

Our relationship with the Dutch Reformed hurch Mission is so close that we expect in time holly to absorb its work. The D.R.C.M. intends withdraw from Nigeria and its whole vast field f nearly one million people will become our and the iv church's responsibility so far as Protestant ission work is concerned.

From a missionary point of view we sustain no fficial relationship to the Church of the Brethren Mission, but what is lacking on the missionary ide is provided by the ecclesiastical situation. This e must next note.

The church which has grown out of our mission ork, like its mother mission, does not stand alone. he too is part of a larger whole. This whole is nown as the *Taryyar Ekklesioyin Kristi A Sudan* the Federation of Churches of Christ in the Suan), more familiarly known as T. E. K. A. S. To his federation belong all the five churches that ave grown out of S. U. M. mission work plus the hurch to which the Church of the Brethren Mision has given birth. It was T. E. K. A. S. which at s annual meeting in February, 1955, approved the teps that had so far been taken on the score of thelogical education and asked the missionaries to ontinue to crystallize them.

The Tiv church does not belong to T. E. K. A. S., ut this is largely because of the language barrier, ince few Tiv speak Hausa. Through the D. R. C. M. and even more through our own missionaries working among the Tiv we sustain a close relationship to her, however.

It is within this missionary and ecclesiastical context that the theological school is being founded. Both aspects of this context have again and again been the subject of board and synodical discussion and approval. It is now proposed that to the already existing activities a new and significant one be added. We for our part have already through board recommendation and synodical decision clearly approved the principle of mutual co-operation underlying this new enterprise. The board report on the basis of which the Christian Reformed synod appointed the present writer to go to Nigeria states that "he will serve as instructor for ministerial candidates being prepared by the several missions associated with the Sudan United Mission," and "We believe this will be a significant step in the right direction and the beginning of a seminary program that may have great significance for the future of the African church." (*Acts of Synod*, 1955, pp. 358, 359)

When these words were written much was still vague and crystallization of the basic principle of co-operative theological education was very much needed. A year of study, discussion, and meetings large and small has greatly clarified the picture. The plan that will shortly be laid before the synod of the Christian Reformed Church implements her 1955 decision in the light of the existing missionary and church situation. Both the churches and the missions affected by this program look expectantly to our church to continue to give support and initiative to the work which they believe to be the will of God for the training of ministers in Northern Nigeria.

Notes on the Logic of Theological Language

by Jesse DeBoer

IN AN ARTICLE which appeared in last month's *Journal* I sought to show that there is a good reason for thinking that, just as philosophy does not rival astronomy or morals, so it is not in competition with theology. The philosopher practices the skill of explaining the various modes of intelligent activity displayed in several ways in physics, morals, theology, etc. As a philosopher he can interest himself in the logical peculiarities of theological discourse while realizing that when he begins to offer theological assertions on his own he *ipso facto* becomes a theologian and thereby incurs the risk of forfeiting the power to profit from his special skill.

Now in this paper I shall talk about logical features of the language used in Christian theology. I mean to exclude many very important but non-statement-making language uses, such as religious exhortations and petitions and confessions. The sort of language to be discussed can be exemplified by the following: "God is merciful"; "God sends sunshine and rain on the just and the unjust"; "God loves us as a father loves his children"; "God is active in history"; "Christ will come again in

glory"; "God created the world." And the ensuing discussion of such sentences will work around two questions, namely, "*Can* we talk about God?" and "If we can talk about God, *how* do we manage it?", though I shall not consider these separately. Let me stress the point that these questions are to be taken in their logical sense, not as being satisfied by reports about historical events, such as "Moses said so and so" or "Augustine's book on the Trinity contains the following statement." Philosophical questions are not settled by factual information. Perhaps the questions just given can be rephrased as follows. "When we talk about God, are we doing something which is very like or very unlike our talking about apples or waterfalls or persons? And if it is very unlike such talk, are we justified in keeping the two species of talk in the same class? Perhaps the difference is so great that we cannot be quite sure what happens when we talk about God, and that we cannot very well detect a case of the talk not applying from a case where it does apply."

To begin with, sentences like those cited above purport to make statements, not to be exclamations or promises or questions. Hence they claim that a certain state of affairs is the case, and if a different state of affairs obtained they would be false. Let us accept this without argument. In order to facilitate further study, let us divide the sentence "God loves us" into two parts, subject and predicate. The subject word "God" indicates something about which something is being said, while the predicate words "loves us" supply what is said about the something indicated by the subject word. There is an important logical difference between these two parts which calls for separate comment on each. The predicate words are used in ordinary, natural contexts as well as in application to God; in fact, it is in natural contexts, such as the relation of parents to children, that we learn how to use them, that is, how to discriminate between situations in which their use is either appropriate or inappropriate. But there is no ordinary or natural context for using the word "God"; at least in transcendent theism it is logically wrong to use the word "God" as a name for anything in nature.

I TURN to comment on the subject word in theological sentences. The word "God" is used only in sentences about God; hence we cannot learn to use it in the sort of context in which we learn to use words like "loves" and "hates." How do we come to use it at all? I suggest that we may take the traditional arguments for God's existence as clues to the answer. Let me set aside the ontological argument, since a fact of existence never follows from a definition. This point, incidentally, is the core of Thomas Aquinas' objection to Anselm's original formulation of the ontological arg ment: what Thomas knew very well, Hume a Kant stressed. Nevertheless, this argument serv admirably to sketch something of the character the God who is worshipped by theists, though it also true, as Pascal and Kierkegaard saw, that t *Ens Realissimum* or Necessary Being, the God the philosophers, is not quite the God of the pat archs. The other familiar arguments start fro an empirical premise, that is, a statement abo fact, and from this premise they seek to reach conclusion asserting the existence of a God som thing like the one referred to in the ontological a gument.

These non-ontological arguments are strict speaking not successful: one is not guilty of logic fault if he accepts the premise while rejecting t conclusion. Take for example the causal or cosm logical argument. In the premise the word "caus is used in the ordinary way, that is, as designati items in nature affecting one another; and we lea to use this word in contexts like these. But the a gument proceeds to use the word "cause" in a qu different way; suddenly it jumps clear out of t natural context so as to apply to God as cause of t whole of nature. How do we justify this jump a this ambiguity? Thomas Aquinas pointed out e actly the dual function of the key word "cause Hume and Kant repeated the point and conclud that the double sense had not been justified. Tho ists in our time often patch things up by claimi with rhetorical solemnity that of course all me physical words, like "good" and "one" and "being are analogical, not univocal, and that Thomas' "f ways" are valid because it is legitimate to use t word "cause" analogously, both in the sense of f causing water to boil and in the sense of God ca ing the world's existence. But they do not *pro* they do not show that to avoid inconsistency *must* use "cause" in these two ways. This just ca be done. Some folks trust in the conditions basic the argument; others don't. Neither group is lo cally at fault. The folks who trust in these con tions think it makes sense to ask such questions a Why is there a world at all? Why is the world a ranged as it is instead of in some other way? Th questions are logically odd. There seem to be ways to show a man that he should ask them rules for comparing and testing rival answers them. We do not violate any rules by rejecting su questions altogether, as some existentialists do, r do we violate any rules if we choose to answer th in the manner of a Platonist, a pantheist, or a t ist.

A further point about these non-ontological guments is that they hint at the situations in perience which occasion belief in God. At least t of Thomas' five arguments point to people's sor how coming to be convinced that the existence

ll natural things is contingent or dependent; they re led to say that the world as a whole is an effect. A certain way of taking the order and beauty n nature, or being impressed by the incredibly "intelligent" performances of creatures lacking "intelligence," leads people to speak of the arrangement of nature coming into it from outside, from a ivine source. Again, many people are led by a owerful moral experience to speak of their being nder the authority of God as Lawgiver and Judge.

Now, when people formulate their belief in God hey use words in ways which invite criticism and annot be fully defended. How would we defend expressions used of my relation to God which are aken from law courts or from the pattern of authority between king and subject or between parnt and child? In some sense the words are being tretched or transferred; they should not be understood quite literally. Yet how do we go about pointng out how far the new sense differs from the old? Ve are familiar with ordinary situations where t is appropriate to speak of plaintiff and judge, and with situations where this would not be appropriate; but how can we learn the sense of the same words when used of God and the limits of their proper use? To speak of the whole world as contingent and of God as self-existent or as Necessary Being involves similar problems. In their strict ense the words "contingent" and "necessary" apply to statements, not to things. A statement is necessary when to deny it would be to violate a law f logic; a statement is contingent when its denial would not break a law of logic. The statement "God exists" is on a par with any other factual statement in being contingent. No law of logic is violated if we deny that God exists. Yet we do want o contrast the existence of nature with that of its ranscendent cause; we do so by transferring the words "contingent" and "necessary" from statements, to which they properly apply, to the objects talked about in the statements, to nature and to God. We are sure that this is right and proper, yet we can see that it is also logically irregular

I conclude this discussion of the subject word "God" in theological sentences by saying that while there are no coercive proofs of God's existence, and that while there are no clear-cut rules for the proper use of the key words in the formulations of our belief in God's existence, yet we are in fact led by empirical situations to refer them to something which lies outside of nature, something transcendent, and to speak of God in language the use of which cannot be fully justified.

THIS BRINGS us to the predicate words in sentences about God, such as "loves" or "is active in history." The first thing to notice about them is that in theological sentences they are put to extraordinary use. We learn to use words like "loves" and "active" in ordinary contexts. But now we use them of God. Here is the logical peculiarity of religious assertions: words whose first and natural use is in application to empirical situations are transferred to apply to the transcendent God. Can we understand what is happening here? Can we get clear on rules for the right and wrong use of religious assertions, on how to discriminate between situations which support religious assertions and other situations which do not? What is the logical form of theological statements, and how can we verify or falsify them?

Note first that the application of the predicate words to God involves taking certain events and situations in the world as manifesting God, as revelatory. Every religious doctrine does this; if it did not it could say nothing about God beyond affirming bare existence. Mahayana Buddhism took Guatama's willingness to postpone entrance into Nirvana in order to teach as the key to the pattern of things. Plato uses as keys the craftsman model and circular movement. In Christianity the revelatory events are such as the history of Israel, the life and death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, and the birth and development of the Church. The taking of such events as revelatory brings with it the notion of authority, for whatever manifests the divine has authority. In Christianity the supreme authority is Christ: His work and person are the Word of God.

As for how to understand religious assertions, let us go for clues to passages in the Bible, not (for the moment) to receive religious teaching but to observe the logical nature of such teaching. The prophet Hosea teaches about God's relation to Israel by presenting and commenting on his own relation to his unfaithful wife. The teaching is a parable; an analogy is asserted: God is to Israel as Hosea is to his wife. The logical structure is similar in Jesus' parable of the Prodigal Son and in His own deeds during Passion Week: in the latter case He enters Jerusalem as king and in subsequent days exhibits the nature of His kingship, with the well-known effect of being rejected by almost everyone. In the parable the words are used in their ordinary sense, and then applied in this ordinary sense to God. Hosea is grieved yet forgiving; so is God. But the parable does not explain how and with what modifications the familiar words apply to God. Hosea does not tell us what it is like, inside God's nature, for God to be grieved and unhappy. Obviously such predicates cannot apply to God in exactly the same way they apply to Hosea. So with saying God is jealous, or that He is active in history. When a man is active there are characteristic signs which can be observed; very likely he tires and feels hot. Can we suppose that we know how the sense of the word "active" is being modified when we apply it to God? The answer seems to be *No*. We have to

be familiar with the use of the word "active" in ordinary situations if using it of God is to mean anything to us, but after it is used of God we cannot hold that its ordinary sense applies exactly and we cannot tell just how much of it applies. Unless we can use ordinary words of God we are quite in the dark, but the use of such words does not dispel all obscurity. We have to rely, in using them, on the authority of Christ, the source of the parables.

IF WE GRANT that the predicate words in religious assertions are to be understood in their ordinary sense, yet must undergo modification when applied to God, how can we verify such assertions? Obviously we should not expect complete verification; but we should be clear that it is proper to ask about verification. For, as granted earlier, many theological sentences purport to make statements of fact; they are not exclamations or questions. A statement of fact is *ipso facto* verifiable, at least in the sense that he who wants to test its truth does not thereby show that he does not understand it. If a man challenges the moral judgment "It is wrong to kill" by adducing the fact that headhunters kill from religious duty, he shows that he has misunderstood the judgment, wrongly taking it as a factual statement. There may be, of course, a factual condition preventing our verifying a factual statement, as in the case "Caesar had eggs for breakfast the day he crossed the Rubicon." Our inability to get into a position to verify a statement does not affect its logical status.

Let me advance considerations which make the verifying of religious statements look very difficult. Take the sentence "God is active in history." A condition for understanding the sentence "It is raining" is our ability to discriminate a situation to which the statement applies from one to which it does not. Can a similar condition be satisfied with the theological assertion? If God created the world, there can be no facts at hand to serve as examples of God's inactivity. But in the absence of such examples, do we mean anything at all by God's activity? Perhaps the best we can do is try to imagine what a world would be like if it were to be incompatible with the activity of God; and perhaps we can help ourselves out by trying to appreciate the world picture of Epicureans or Manichees or Nietzsche or Sartre. On the other side we can help ourselves out by fastening our gaze on the events of Hebrew and Christian history; these are the cash value, so to speak, of the doctrines which make Christianity different as a world picture from any non-Christian picture. Nevertheless, we must recognize that the sentence "God is active in history" is harder to cope with logically, that is, to come to terms with in respect to what kind of situations manifest its truth and what kind of situatio would work against it, than such a sentence as " is raining." And we have, no doubt, no rules hand for deciding at what point, if the world we somewhat different from what it is or if events history began to take a turn toward general d integration, we should be obliged to surrender t assertion of God's activity.

Certain religious statements, such as "God kind" or "God is merciful" or "God loves us," se to be much more nearly testable than "God is tive"; in fact, they seem to be placed in doubt obvious facts of suffering. If we grant that we a to understand "God loves us" in the way we und stand "My father loves me," and if doing so is t base for communication of meaning between number of persons, then it would seem that must say that utterly pointless and irredeema suffering would be incompatible with the truth the statement, and it would seem further that the are facts in the world which are difficult to reco cile with God's love. If a human father did not t everything in his power to bring relief to a ch suffering from polio or cancer, or if he showed distress at failure, we should doubt his concern love. But what does it mean to say that God lov the child who is dying from an inoperable canc of the throat? Where are the signs of His concer Now, if God does love us, there can be of course facts which are incompatible with His love; b what is His love like if it is compatible with t suffering of the child, and does this deserve bei called love? Is it not more like being let down every side? Hasn't the sense of the word "lov been eroded entirely, so that the word "hate" wou be equally fitting? I recommend that we rere the remarks of Ivan in *The Brothers Karamaz* about the sufferings of children.

It seems to me that the Christian is commit to honesty about his assurance of the factual tru of the sentence "God loves us as a father loves children." He should acknowledge that sufferi counts against God's love or mercy, and that in t abstract pointless and irredeemable suffering wo count against it decisively. But he believes th God *is* merciful, that is, that there are no fa which do falsify his belief. How can he maints himself in this belief? Only, it seems to me, further faith. He should confess his faith in t resurrection of the body and the life everlasti Faith in these is certainly confidence in the unse but it has the importance, logically, of saying th the obvious facts of suffering are not the wh story and that the unseen parts are decisive. Aga the Christian should confess that Christ both hibits the love of God and teaches us what it is li Not that it is easy to submit to the leading of t love, for it may require losing the whole wo Once more, he should confess his belief that

submitting to Christ's authority he will find strength to become a new creature.

I CONCLUDE with a few practical and hortatory sentences which are in a sense not proper parts of a philosophical discussion. I invite you to study recent developments in philosophy, especially as practiced in England, with a view to getting clearer on the special task of philosophy. It is not hard to see that most thinkers to whom by tradition we apply the label "philosopher" have worked at many tasks which are not philosophical in any precise sense of this term. Clarity on the special task of philosophy will help us to appreciate the philosophical skill of Plato or Augustine or Thomas; it will also help us to note how each of them takes a believing posture toward the universe. The philosopher should not make up systems of faith but reflect on faith itself. The Christian philosopher can remind us that we always live by faith and not by sight. I trust that I have supplied grounds for holding that this is literally true. Finally, philosophers and non-philosophers can and should cooperate to revitalize appreciation of the Christian faith by pointing out how, while Plato, for example, also believes what he cannot see, his faith is in a sense not faith at all, he doesn't believe in God. Plato is in despair about the world, history is tiresome repetition, nothing ever happens, the body and sex and the common man are as it were outside the divine concern. What Christians need to do today is to restate the peculiar content and quality of their own faith, and perhaps they won't be shaken up to do the job until they themselves see their neighbors taking for granted, despite formal repetition of words, that really, as Nietzsche said, "God is dead."

Pages From the Past

For the Centennial Year — a collection of contemporary accounts and documents which reflect something of the origins and developing life of the Christian Reformed Church. Selected and edited by Dr. George Stob.

The Secession of 1857

Gijsbert Haan, who had been a persistent and outspoken critic of the union of Classis Holland with the Dutch Reformed church, and who found himself in difficulty and conflict in his own congregation at Grand Rapids and in Classis Holland, seceded from the church at Grand Rapids on April 14, 1856. This action also terminated his relation to Classis Holland and to the Dutch Reformed Church.

Notice of the secession of Haan was given to Classis Holland at its meeting of October 9, 1856. It was then asked whether Haan, as "one who tramples under foot the brethren," should not be disciplined. The Classis declared that since Haan had seceded, he was beyond the jurisdiction of Classis.

Haan's secession appeared to have had no other effect upon Classis Holland at that time, although at the same meeting of Classis Holland (October 9, 1856), the church of Graaschap, Michigan, registered objections against the use of hymns in the Dutch Reformed Church. The objections were answered by Van Raalte, but apparently not to the satisfaction of Graafschap. In due course the Graafschap church, and other congregations and individuals, followed Haan's lead and seceded from the Dutch Reformed Church.

The first expressions of discontent at Graafschap seem to coincide with the arrival of Rev. K. Vanden Bosch from the Netherlands. Rev. Vanden Bosch became minister of the Noordeloos church, and seems to have functioned as counsellor to the vacant church at Graafschap. In his history: *De Christelijke Gereformeerde Kerk in Noord Amerika* (p. 92), Henry Beets observed that the Minutes of the Graafschap church from September 1849 to the Spring of 1856 make no comment whatsoever about the union with the Dutch Reformed Church. Suddenly, however, certain matters do appear in the minutes of a congregational meeting held on March 16, 1856, and led by the Rev. K. Vanden Bosch. The following minutes appear in the record for that date:

Art. 1. The members of the Consistory, being acquainted with conditions in the congregation with reference to the union with the Church in the East [Dutch Reformed Church — Ed.], the objections that are daily heard and experienced, give opportunity to the brethren to speak in turn.

Art. 2. Reference was made to a letter from a minister, John Berdan, who separated himself from the Church with which we have united,[1] in which it is proved that we do not belong to the true Church. Some people come with objections which cannot be proved, and they are admonished by Rev. Vanden Bosch to be careful; others are more specific.

Art. 3. After having heard and weighed everything, Rev. Vanden Bosch says that we must proceed and try to gain more information, and then protest; and if that did not produce results, the Reverend is of a mind to give up the fellowship with the Church in the East, and remain with the position, in Doctrine and Government, of the Seceded Church, according to the Synod held in Amsterdam in 1840.

1 Rev. Berdan was minister of the True Reformed Dutch Church, which seceded from the Dutch Reformed Church in 1822. For an account of the cause and character of that Secession, cf. D. L. Van Halsema, "Hopkins, Hackensack, Haan," in *The Reformed Journal*, Jan. 1957, pp. 8, 9.

Pages From the Past — Continued

Art. 4. The Congregation joins in this.

(Quoted in Beets, *op. cit.*, p. 92).

The Graafschap church did register objections against the use of hymns at the Classis meeting of October 9, 1856. At the Consistory meeting of October 14 the delegates to Classis reported that there were sharp conflicts at Classis, centering around Haan of Grand Rapids and also the Dutch Reformed Church. These matters were discussed at length. Further evidences of dissatisfaction with the Dutch Reformed Church appeared in the congregational meeting of February 4, 1857. The following minutes appear in the record of that meeting:

Art. 1. Several members brought objections with reference to our union with the Dutch Reformed Church, since that Church, according to letters received here from the East, is filled with errors, among others that the Perseverance of the Saints is denied, Predestination is not set forth or wrongly so, also Freemasonry, a collection of 800 hymns, the permission given recently to the preaching of Mr. P. H. Scholte of Pella, the failure to maintain ecclesiastical discipline.

Art. 3. After all of this it was decided to protest immediately.

(Quoted in Beets, *op. cit.*, pp. 92, 93).

Things came to a head in Graafschap at the congregational meeting held on March 16, 1857, the record of which contains the following minutes:

Art. 1. Discussion takes place again concerni the Dutch Reformed Church, and notice was tak of the Report of Rev. Wijkof that if she doesn't sa isfy us, he gives us the fullest right to bid her fraternal adieu and to return again to our positio

Art. 2. Hereupon it was decided to declare ou selves, at the next meeting of Classis, as holding the Doctrine and Government of the Reform Church [i.e., the historic Reformed Church in t Netherlands, whose position and character is re resented in the decisions of the Synod of Do 1618-19 — Ed.], and to separate from all who tw or falsify the same and from all who remain wi those who so do.

(Quoted in Beets, *op. cit.*, p. 93).

Meanwhile, on January 25, 1857, Rev. H. G. Klijn, m ister of the church in Grand Rapids, openly joined Ha and his associates in their secession, and became th preacher. The newly seceded group was organized as church (ultimately becoming the First Christian R formed Church, now Bates Street, Grand Rapids, Mic on March 19, 1857, with Rev. H. G. Klijn as minist Gijsbert Haan, Jan Gelock and Johannes Gezon as elde and B. De Graaf, H. Moerman, and A. Pleune as deacc (Cf. Beets, *op. cit.*, p. 95).

When Classis Holland met in Zeeland, Michigan, April 8, 1857, several documents of secession were pla before that assembly. They are here reproduced as t appear in the *Minutes of Classis Holland*, 1848-1858, 240-243

Documents of Secession

No. 1, of Vanden Bosch

Art. 16. There are read the documents of secession sent in by the consistories of Graafschap and Polkton, together with those of Rev. Klein and Rev. Van Den Bosch, which are as follows:

Noordeloos, March 14, 1857

To the Consistory of Zeeland:

By this I notify you that I can hold no ecclesiastical communion with you, for the reason that I can not hold all of you who have joined the Dutch Reformed Church to be the true church of Jesus Christ, and consequently I renounce all fellowship with you and declare myself no longer to belong to you. I am the more constrained to do this by the fear of God, on account of the abominable and church-destroying heresy and sins which are rampant among you, which, if the Lord will and we live, I shall present to the next meeting of Classis.[2]

I hope that your eyes may yet be opened to see your extreme wickedness,[3] to take it to heart, and to be converted therefrom.

(*Signed*) K. Van Den Bosch
Minister at Noordeloo

2 There is no indication that Rev. Vanden Bosch was present at "the next meeting of Classis," or further declared his position in writing.

3 The original Dutch is: "*verregaande zonde*," translated as given by the Joint Committee for the translation of the Classis Holland Minutes.

Secession of Rev. Klyn. No. 2

To the Classical Assembly of the Dutch Reform Church, to be held at Zeeland, April 8th, 1857

Reverend Brethren:

The God of love cause you to be one in Christ, the power of the Holy Ghost.

In connection with the report of my withdra from the American denomination, the Reform Protestant Dutch Church, presented to your ass bly by the delegates, I hereby give expression to cordial thanks for the love and honor enjo among you, together with the sincere desire, t you could join with us in our standpoint.

Brethren, ministers of the gospel, we are gether ministers of the secession [i.e., of 1834 the Netherlands — Ed.], in so far as your overse in the midst of you walked in that same path v us in the Netherlands. Yea, we were separa from all Protestant denominations. Brethren, I hort you in love not to lose this your charac

The Church, the Bride of Christ, is a garden enclosed, a well shut up, and a fountain sealed. The Lord open your eyes, that you may follow your calling, whereby the Church of Christ may walk in one way, to the glorification of his holy name.

I commend myself to a continuance of your fraternal friendship, that no spirit of bitterness may reign in us and among us, for we are brethren, beloved of the Lord, bought by Christ, in order that we should serve him without fear, in holiness and righteousness all the days of our life. The King of glory dwell in your assembly, that you may do his will. Now the Lord of Peace himself give you peace at all times and in every way. The Lord be with you all.

Your affectionate brother in Christ,

(*Signed*) H. G. KLEIJN

Grand Rapids, Mich.
April 6, 1857

Secession at Graafschap. No. 3

Graafschap, April 7, 1857

To the Classical Assembly, Reformed Protestant Dutch Church, to be held at Zeeland, April 8th, 1857.

REVEREND BRETHREN:

We are obliged to give you notice of our present ecclesiastical standpoint, namely, separating ourselves from your denomination, together with all Protestant denominations, with which we thoughtlessly became connected upon our arrival in America. We are uniting ourselves with the Afgescheidene Gereformeerde Kerk [*i.e.*, the Seceded Reformed Church — Ed.] in the Netherlands, and exhort you herewith affectionately to walk in the same way with us. The reasons for this our secession, namely, 113 members, or communicants, are as follows:

(1) The collection of 800 hymns, introduced contrary to the church order.

(2) Inviting [men of] all religious views to the Lord's Supper, excepting Roman Catholics.

(3) Neglecting to preach the Catechism regularly, [to hold] catechetical classes, and [to do] house visitation.

(4) That no religious books are circulated without the consent of other denominations, directing our attention to the Sabbath booklet, with the practice by J. Van Der Meulen, in 1855.

(5) And what grieves our hearts most in all of this is that there are members among you who regard our secession in the Netherlands as not strictly necessary, or [think that] it was untimely.

(6) In the report of Rev. Wyckoff he gives us liberty to walk in this ecclesiastical path.

Brethren, we are glad that almost the entire congregation, the number of members given above, with us, the consistory, and our dear little children, again stand upon the same standpoint on which our fathers enjoyed so great blessedness, and oh, we should rejoice still more if the King of the Church should bring you to this conviction. This is the duty of us all. The God of love be your counsellor and guide to walk in the way of truth.

Your affectionate brethren in Christ
In the name of the Consistory,

(*Signed*) J. F. VAN ANROOIJ, *Pres.*
HENRY STRABBING, *Clerk*

Secession of Polkton. No. 4

Polkton, April 1, 1857

To the Classical Assembly of the Dutch Reformed Church.

REVEREND BRETHREN:

Hereby we notify you that we declare ourselves, as members of consistory of the above mentioned church, with the congregation, no longer to belong to your denomination, and have betaken ourselves to the standpoint we had when we left the Netherlands, in order thus again to be in connection with the church of the Netherlands; and the reason is this, that your denomination fraternizes with those who are in opposition to the doctrine of our fathers, and [this] is very well known to you, if you are honest, not to touch upon all points. Since there are others who have told you the points item by item, it is not necessary for us [to do so]. In the hope that God, who alone is able to make a roaring sea calm and smooth, may also make your hearts so calm and smooth that you will walk with us in the way of our fathers, is our heartfelt desire and prayer.

(*Signed*) J. H. VAN DER WERP, *Elder*
LUKAS ELBERS, *Elder*
HENRY VINKEMULDER, *Deacon*

After the reading of these letters, the President [Rev. P. J. Oggel, Minister at Grand Haven — Ed.] states that the letters have come before the assembly as notification, and that they must, of course, be placed on file as such; that, however, it grieved him to see enumerated from that source such serious [and] unsubstantiated accusations: as, for instance, that the principle of the secession in the Netherlands was abandoned, since he was not conscious of the least alienation from the brethren, and that it was nonsense to call an immigration hither, and union with the Reformed Church of this country a separation, in an ecclesiastical sense, from our brethren in the Netherlands, since they, indeed, had never seceded from the Reformed Churches, but [had seceded] from the illegitimate and heretical church directorate [*i.e.*, State-imposed form of church government — Ed.] which had been forced [upon people] in the Netherlands in 1816, and

Pages From the Past — Continued

from the denomination which acquiesced in the same, which had abolished the form of subscription binding [the signers] to the doctrine of the truth; that if he lived in the Netherlands he would continue to do the same, but that the Reformed Church [in America — Ed.] had maintained the old Reformed principles of church government and the formula of subscription for ministers, and had nothing in common with that church directorate of 1816.

After this address by the President of the Classis, Rev. Van Raalte took the floor and spoke at length about these letters of Secession. These remarks constitute a most significant answer to the secession, spoken as they were by the man who was the leader of the Western Michigan immigration, the leader and founder of the colony, the church of Holland, and Classis Holland, the moving spirit behind the union with the Dutch Reformed Church, and the main target for all the criticism and discontent that came to expression in the Western Michigan settlement.

Rev. Van Raalte says that although there is nothing else for the Classis to do than to receive these letters of secession as notification, as it is the fruit of a lust for schism already for a long time manifested by a few leaders, against which there is no weapon, which will do us less damage outside of the church than inside of it; and although the speaker has no desire to abridge the liberty of those who are separating themselves, also is even earnestly desirous that we may not be involved in quarrels, and [thus] arouse [mutual] bitterness among the Holland people, but may avoid everything that may give occasion thereto, and may, as far as possible, promote [mutual] love — yea he could also wish that those who fancy that they can create a holier and purer church than the Dutch Reformed Church of this country may serve to put us to shame and to be a blessing to us by spiritual prosperity and an active fruit-bearing Christianity — nevertheless he is constrained with his whole soul to testify against this conduct that tears asunder the church of God, and warns each and every one against such a reckless course of conduct, which will bring ruin upon our posterity; [and to point out] that the whole affair (excepting a few leaders who fan the fire of distrust and suspicion), is a mixture of ignorance, sectarianism, and a trampling under foot of the brethren, of which the ministers of the Classis of Holland have been constantly for years the prey, which trampling under foot now extends itself to the entire old Dutch Reformed Church and the orthodox denominations — [a spirit] which has never been characteristic of the Reformed Church [and] which shall bear the judgment of God. The most recent conversation he had with Rev. Kleijn had convinced the speaker anew that this is the case. When he was asked for the reasons for secession, the reverend gentleman, in the course of the conversation, gave the following reasons: that he w convinced that the Dutch Reformed Church h become so liberal that she united herself with Protestant sects: this was clear to him from h title, since she called herself "Protestant"; that had once withdrawn himself from all Protesta denominations, and now had returned again to t same standpoint.

He was informed that some years ago this wo was added to the title to make it clear, since a those of Romish views and other sects call the selves "Reformed" or "Gereformeerd"; that ought never to be ashamed of that name, the na of our Reformers, as it is a title of honor, and precisely a name that is characteristic of t Christianity, which surely must always live in state of protest against the kingdom of darkne that it was a mistake for him to say that he h withdrawn himself from all Protestant church that he must not have thought of the Presbyteri Scotch, or Swiss churches, inasmuch as we in c secession rejected the "Hervormde" church rectorates, as they were established in 1816, w the errors which those authorities protected, a returned to the doctrine, discipline, and service the Reformed Church.

In the second place he says that the Du Church is a party to an agreement not to be lowed to circulate or to use in Sabbath schools a books unless the same had been approved by fo teen denominations; whereupon it is pointed to him that he is in error, that in all America such agreement between the churches exists; t the American hates such a thing; that alm every church, and also the Dutch Reform Church, has its own Board of Publication, to p lish its own characteristically Reformed boo that it has also its own Sabbath School Boa which prints and sells its own catechisms a booklets for the instruction of the children; a that the little book of the Sabbath School Union a product, not of any church but of citizens and v ous Christians who seek to propagate the truth c side of the churches.

In the third place he [Rev. Kleijn] assigns a reason that the Lord's Supper is celebrated with Protestant sects, that there is Remonstrant prea ing, that discipline is neglected, etc. To the quest how he became assured of this, he replies that Haan [*i.e.*, Gijsbert Haan — Ed.] says so, and t in proof of the same he had shown various let from people in the East, whom Rev. Kleijn was at liberty to suspect, since they were Christians. was asked why, then, he so easily dared to reject testimony of his brethren in office, whose Christ character he acknowledged, who constantly decla the precise opposite.

Further, he was asked whether current rum and letters from individuals passed from hand

and furnished adequate ground, to build upon them ur judgments and actions in ecclesiastical affairs, ea the weightiest steps in church life, such as that f secession. How easy would it then be to collect umors about persons now in church service in the lassis of Holland and Wisconsin, and letters from isgruntled people, sufficient as a basis for the rongest condemnation? And [he was asked] hether a church must not be judged from the acts f her highest assemblies, in place of accepting the vil reports against her, and judging her without a earing.

Further, he is informed that it is by no means the istom for denominations miscellaneously to celerate the communion, which would render impossie all internal order and the exercise of discipline; hat in case of participating in the Lord's Supper niting with the church is required; that among the mericans the importance of order is too well underood to undermine the existence of the [denominaonal] bodies by such improprieties; that, on the ntrary, there is even too much zeal for the church f one's choice than that one should not participate n the communion exclusively in one's own denomiation; that the Old-Dutch Church by faith and vigance opposes desecration of the Lord's table, but hat we, as little as they, would be willing to refuse ne communion to a member of one of the orthodox hurches who confesses faith in Christ, accidentally resent, e.g., as a stranger travelling through; since ne Reformed Church has never advocated and prac ced such an exaltation of itself [and] such a hard nd arrogant rejection of the other churches,[4] but on ne contrary, fraternal fellowship, not only in the use f the Lord's Supper together, but even granted them membership and a vote in her Synod [*i.e.*, Synod of ort, 1618-19 — Ed.], where the Confession of Faith as to be settled.

To bring about a secession and schism in the hurch of God on the basis of such un-Reformed rinciples, of such gross ignorance, and palpable landers, causes us to tremble, and to be far from aving the least fellowship therewith. With other ersons, also, one finds no more valid grounds: e.g., he assertion of the brethren from Graafscap that he son of Rev. Van der Meulen, in order to circulate ooks, had to have the consent of various denominaions rests upon a misunderstanding so palpably conrary to the entire American state of affairs as to require no refutation: the only thing is that it is customary to procure for such youthful students open doors with the various denominations by means of letters of introduction, and [thus] to encourage hem. This slander is also refuted at present by the colportage of the student Vander Veen. With regard to the preaching of the Catechism and the instruction of the youth in the truths of God, the Synod has recently anew laid emphasis upon the existing regulations. And that people secede by reason of hymns is a rejection of all the Protestant churches of the Reformation, which have all made use of hymns ever since the times of the Reformation, even of the Holland Reformed Church, which adopted for use only those hymns which it approved, and rejected lawlessness and that which was tainted with Popery and Arminianism.

After these and similar remarks and exhortations from various members, the assembly resolves to accept the notification and to lay it on the table and to commend the matter to the Lord.

Birthday of the Christian Reformed Church?

April 8, 1857, the date on which the above documents of secession were handed in to Classis Holland, has generally been taken to be the birthday of the Christian Reformed Church. This is due in part, no doubt, to the statement of Dr. Henry Beets, who in his history, *De Christelijke Gereformeerde Kerk* (published in 1918), says: "*The eighth of April*, 1857, was the birthday of what is now called the *Christian Reformed Church* in North America" (p. 98). It appears that on this assumption the Centennial Sunday in the Centennial celebration has been designated April 7, 1957, as the day closest to April 8; and this day is set apart as the occasion for the thank-offering for the Centennial Memorial.

Actually, April 8, 1857, is not the birthday of the Christian Reformed Church. It was only the day on which four parties — two individuals and two congregations — gave notice to Classis Holland of their secession from the Dutch Reformed Church. Prior to this, on March 19, 1857, a group in Grand Rapids, having previously separated from the Second Dutch Reformed Church of that city, formed an independent church. Subsequent to that date, on April 7, 1857, members of the Dutch Reformed Church in Vriesland seceded and formed an independent church.

The date on which these and the churches that seceded on April 8, 1857, met together to organize into a separate denomination, cannot be determined with absolute certainty. In his history cited above, Henry Beets says that the seceded churches came together for the first Classis meeting "presumably in the beginning of May, 1857." In his later history, *The Christian Reformed Church*, published in 1923 (p. 49), Beets indicated that a small minority of the Michigan Hollanders "effected a classical organization April, 1857, at Holland, Michigan." The late D. H. Kromminga also notes that "the returned churches met in the same month of April 1857 . . . in the town of Holland, Michigan, and thus began the history of the new denomination" (*The Christian Reformed Tradition*, p. 116). Dr. John H. Kromminga, in his history, *The Christian Reformed Church*, p. 34, incorrectly states: ". . . The seceding churches . . . organized themselves into a classis, numbering five churches, and held their first classical meeting on October 7th, 1857. This was the actual beginning of the Christian Reformed Church in America."

The first meeting of the seceded churches, at which they were organized into a new church body, was held shortly after the notice of the secession of two churches and two individuals had been presented to Classis Holland. The minutes of that first meeting, however, have most unfortunately been lost. Reference to this is made in Art. 11 of the meeting of Classis Michigan of the *True Dutch Reformed Church*, held on October 12, 13, 1864.

4 Van Raalte probably means the Reformed Church in eneral. The Dutch Reformed Church, in Church Order of ort, stipulates that "none shall be admitted to the Lord's upper except those who . . . have made a confession of the eformed religion."

Pages From the Past — Continued

Classis noted that "this Classical Minute Book is not complete, and the head of it is missing; especially the ground upon which our denomination left and separated from the Dutch Reformed Church, and also the grounds on which our denomination is founded." It was decided, therefore, to make search for the minutes of the "first Classical Meeting held at Holland," and failing to find them a "brief account of the history of our departure and the grounds therefore shall be drawn up and placed in the front of this Minute Book."

Dr. Henry Beets later discovered a significant document, which was placed as Appendix I in his book, *The Christian Reformed Church*, published in 1923. This document is a letter, dated Grand Rapids, April 29, 1857, and sent to the Synod of the Seceded Church in the Netherlands, in the name of H. G. Klyn, President, and K. Vanden Bosch, Clerk. This letter, obviously written at the behest of the first Classical Assembly of the group which seceded from Classis Holland, gave a report of the secession and the reasons for it, and pleaded for recognition by and union with the Seceded Reformed Church of the Netherlands.

If this document is dated for the day the first Clas Meeting was held, then April 29, 1857 may be taken the birthday of the Christian Reformed Church. T Centennial Committee, in the booklet *Centennial Fa and Background*, p. 13, does indeed say concerning Ap 29, 1857: "Final organizational step of new denomin tion: meeting of Graafschap, Grand Rapids, Noordelo Polkton, and Vriesland churches to form a Classis. T is the birthday of the Christian Reformed Church This assumption is questionable, however, since the da of the letter is associated with place of origin of t letter — "Grand Rapids." But, according to the Classi Minutes of October 12-13, 1864, the first assembly the new church was held in "Holland."

In any event, the letter signed by Klyn and Vand Bosch, and sent to the Synod of the Seceded Reform Church of the Netherlands, is a document which ca out of the first Classis meeting, and it ought to stand the head of all official records as the document which flects the founding and organization of the Christian R formed Church.

This significant document, together with others be ing on the organization of the Christian Reform Church, will be reproduced in the next issue of T *Reformed Journal.*

BOOK REVIEW

DE UNIONS EN DE UNION-SECURITIES. *By J. G. P. Westera.* 35 pp. Hamilton, Ontario: Kuntz Printing and Publishing Co., 1956. $1.00

Reviewed by HENRY J. RYSKAMP, Dean of the Faculty of Calvin College.

Members of the Reformed and Christian Reformed churches in Canada who have migrated to Canada from the Netherlands have discovered that in order to secure or retain employment in certain occupations they must join a so-called neutral union. Unfamiliar with the history and the laws of their new country, many of them have consequently, and quite understandably, sought to apply to their new situations and their new problems the thinking and the solutions with which they were familiar in the old country. This has resulted in an effort on their part to apply, as if this were a firmly established principle, the rule that a Christian may not belong to a neutral or general union. This effort was made, apparently, without sufficient understanding of the history, of the nature, and of the legal status of union organization in Canada, and without realization of the practical impossibility of applying to the Canadian scene the particular solution now applied to labor problems by members of the Reformed churches in the Netherlands.

The immigrants have learned, for example, that to secure employment in a particular establishment the individual may have to agree to become a member of the union which has been recognized as the bargaining agent by the employer. Regarding it as wrong to become a member of the existing unions, many of them have joined in the organization of the Canadian Christian Labor Association. They have discovered, however, that the C.L.A. is powerless unless it is certified as a bargaining agent, and they have had to face the fact that the C.L.A. cannot gain certification unless it stands ready to accept as members all the workers who are to be covered by an agreement with the employer. This the C.L.A., according to its constitution, cannot do. Apparently, then, the C.L.A. cannot succeed in gaining certification because it cannot admit all employees without discrimination because of race, creed, or color.

Confronted with this strange and difficult situation, Reformed Church members called upon a Mr. J. G. P. Westera, a graduate with a Master of Law degree from the Free University in the Netherlands, to present them with a report on the history and legal position of the unions in Canada, and also with specific information on the history and legality of the Closed Shop and the Check-Off. This assignment, made possible by financial support of members of the Reformed Churches, was accepted by Mr. Westera. In the thirty-four page booklet under review he renders a concise, factual port on the matters he investigated, a in addition he offers his opinion as what the workers confronted by problem should do.

Mr. Westera points out that the tra unions in Canada, as in the Uni States, have from the beginning b organized as "communities of interes as associations of workers who act gether to gain certain specific ends su as higher wages, shorter hours, and b ter working conditions. He states t the unions, according to their con tutions, have not been motivated radical philosophies or ideologies. admits, to be sure, that individual m bers and leaders have at times profes adherence to radical philosophies. with reference to the unions in gene he insists that they have been organi and still are organized simply to g certain concrete, desirable ends their members. This being the case, contends that a working man may j a union to achieve desirable ends himself and his fellow union memb as certainly as an employer may j with his fellow employers in a trade sociation to gain desirable ends employers. What one person may to gain a desirable end may be d and can be done more effectively two or more persons acting togetl Such acting in concert is not wrong less the ends sought or the methods u to gain the ends are wrong. Indeed

Westera implies, such acting in acert for necessary and desirable ends a matter of duty for *all* the employees.

Mr. Westera points out that De Sarnin Lohman and Dr. A. Kuyper ok virtually the same position as stat above when they first expressed emselves on the matter of labor ornization. According to him, they did t advocate separate Christian labor ions until it became apparent that e general unions in the Netherlands re motivated by Marxism or other dical ideologies. In Canada, he reats, that, although the trend toward e "One Big Union" is becoming more onounced and the evil practices enged in by the unions are becoming re frequent, the unions still main- n their old community of interest e of organization. Under the cirmstances, and especially in view of v in Canada, he does not believe the ristian should refrain from joining e general unions.

Mr. Westera traces the history of ionism in England, the United States, d Canada, indicating that union ornization has very specifically been clared legal in all these countries. He clares further that under the Com- on Law in Canada the Closed Shop d the Check-Off are not to be rerded as illegal. These tactics or apons of trade unionism he regards the logical outgrowth of collective rgaining. They were, he points out, e natural development in the United ates after the passage of the Wagner ct which compelled the employers to gage in collective bargaining with eir employees if the necessary numer of employees so desire. He admits at the Closed Shop may have to be ndemned if the union which uses it ould gain a monopoly position and the constitution and practices of such union should be such that a Christian annot conscientiously be a member of If in such a case the Christian borer does not have the opportunity join any other union, Mr. Westera dmits that he may be compelled to ive up his employment.

Mr. Westera finds no difficulty in pproving the Check-Off. Indeed, he elieves that, if union membership is esirable or rather that if one concedes hat collective bargaining is necessary, ne must admit that the Check-Off is an ffective way of arranging for the colction of dues. What opposition can here be, under collective bargaining, the employer's collecting the dues? he asks. A similar arrangement for the collecting of the income tax is most effective.

In Canada, as in the United States, one union, and only one, deals with the employer if a sufficient number of the employees have expressed their desire for collective bargaining. The one union which wins the bargaining right may not discriminate against any individual, in accepting him for membership, on account of race, creed, or color. In Ontario, Mr. Westera points out, the C.L.A. failed to gain certification, in a specific instance, because its constitution does discriminate on the basis of religion. He adds, as his opinion, that the Labor Relations Board and the Court could not have done otherwise than they did in this case. Indeed, he contends that it would be unethical as well as illegal under Canadian law for the C.L.A. to attempt to gain the bargaining rights in a particular plant. If it happened, for example, that the C.L.A. did gain the bargaining right, how could it then admit an unbeliever to membership if such an individual sought employment in the plant? If in such a case the individual did join the C.L.A. the union would be denying its constitution or the unbeliever would be dishonest.

Mr. Westera admits that he has not been able to make an exhaustive study of Canadian labor law and labor union history. To this reviewer, however, his resume seems accurate and his analysis very fair. He does not give a blanket endorsement of the so-called neutral unions. In fact, he frankly recognizes the danger in the present trend toward the One Big Union. He admits that, if the concentration of power in the unions goes much further and the evil practices, of which the unions are not only accused but often found guilty, become more frequent, it may be necessary for Christian laborers to withdraw from the unions.

For the present, Mr. Westera concludes that he cannot do otherwise than to advise the Dutch immigrants to join the unions and to make their influence felt in them. Such membership and participation should continue until it becomes clear to the Christian that his membership in the union, because of the union's activities, is in conflict with his conscience. Membership in the union he declares must not bind, must not become a burden to, the Christian conscience.

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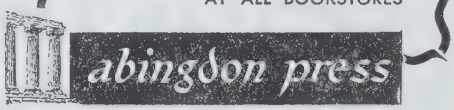


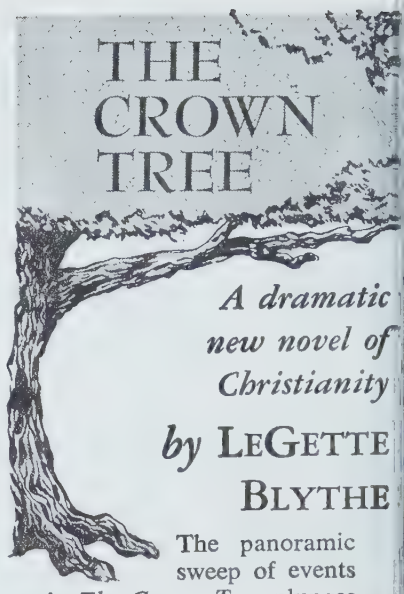
In this connection he reminds those whom he is advising that a union member may not be expelled for disagreeing with union policies and practices. It is, he insists, the member's duty to protest union activities which conflict with his ideas of right and wrong. The union may not discriminate against him because of his religious views and he should continue to give utterance to his conviction until he is expelled. If the union does make membership unbearable for him or expel him, Mr. Westera suggests that the individual take recourse to his rights under the law. With the steady growth toward the all inclusive big union, he further suggests, it would be desirable to seek a change in the law to provide for representation in one establishment by more than one union. Thus employees could be represented by the union of their choice and the bargaining agency for the workers could be a body representing the one or more unions in the establishment.

Mr. Westera realizes how difficult the implementing of the advice referred to above would be and how impracticable it might also prove to be. He advises further, therefore, that, under the

present law, the C.L.A. in Canada be organized as a "community of interest" union so that all the employees in a given plant may become members if the C.L.A. is chosen as the bargaining agent. He suggests also that the C.L.A. organize study groups to investigate labor problems in order to bring Christian principles to bear on labor activities.

To the careful reader of this pamphlet it must be apparent that Mr. Westera's counsel is not given on the basis of mere expediency. He wants action on the basis of "principle." He would agree, although he does not put it just that way, that a man of principle would see not only the justification but also the necessity of collective action on the part of labor. He would indeed, I believe, insist that a man motivated by principle would feel obligated to join with his fellows in working for desirable ends so long as the means used are justifiable. He is not convinced that it is a matter of principle that a Christian may join only a Christian labor union and that he may not join a neutral or general union. He is not ready, however, to make a broad generalization to the effect that membership in the neutral unions of today is permissible. He urges, therefore, that a careful investigation of the present-day labor organizations be made by a committee that is not inclined to pre-judge the situation, an objective committee therefore prepared to investigate grievances against the unions.

In this booklet Mr. Westera states the facts clearly and sets forth his own conclusions with utmost candor. The booklet should be widely read and the recommendations carefully considered. To make the pamphlet available to a larger number it should be translated into English.



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LETTERS TO THE JOURNAL

DEAR DR. [GEORGE] STOB:

A few years ago I ventured to oppose your writings in *The Reformed Journal* on the subject of the Christian labour movement because I felt that you were doing serious wrong to the idea and the practice of Christian social action. Since that time I have read whatever was published in your magazine in regard to this matter and never again entered the battlefield.

This time, however, I feel the urge to intervene very much, not to oppose you, but to thank you for your help. More and more, while trying to spread the idea of a Christian labour movement and promoting its cause I have come to the conclusion that wrong conceptions of a Christian labour movement are threatening this cause especially among its friends. Among the members we find groups and individuals who wish to make the Christian labour movement a Calvinistic or even a Christian Reformed movement. Among its opponents we meet persons and groups who make the charge: you call yourselves a *Christian* labour movement but you should call it Christian Reformed.

The latter charge we have always encountered with the reproach that other people and other leaders are always standing aloof from the Christian labour movement, thus bringing about a situation in which only specific Christians compose its rank and file. I still am of the opinion that this countercharge on our part is right, but on the other hand one should admit that especially church leaders and other people may stand aloof for fear that they might step in the wrong boat — a boat that takes a course other than it is allegedly taking.

I am very much pleased that in the last paragraphs of your editorial "The Burden of the Laboring Man" you show a vision which is altogether different from the one you heretofore presented, and one which is in complete harmony with the views expressed many times by leaders of the Christian labour movement in Europe. I for one came to this continent to promote that kind of labour movement which is depicted by you in the following words: "Nor do I have objections to the organization of a Christian labor association, provided that 'Christian' be understood in the broad sense as representing universal principles of justice which, because of the Christian influence and tradition, may be said to be dominant in Western society."

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You will receive some idea of our ruggle when you read the last two opies of our monthly magazine *The uide*. I would draw your attention specially to the article "Kwaliteits-rganisatie of Vakvereniging." I am ailing these copies to you as well as ur reply to the Department of Labour - Labour Relations Branch — in con-ection with the charges made against ie Christian Labour Association of anada. In reading the above men-oned article you will see that the ounders and promoters of the Christian abour movement in the Netherlands ad exactly the same vision as ex-ressed in your article. That kind of labour movement is required for the aboring man on this continent. So ar I have seldom, if ever, seen that iewpoint expressed on this continent s clearly as is done in your statement. thank you for it.

The Christian labour movement has mission in the world of labour, also n this continent.

It has to plant both its feet in the abour world.

It has to go down into the material nd spiritual misery of the working ass.

Without doctrines.

Without asking for confessions.

Just to make itself one with those in eed as the medical mission does in eathen lands. Its deeds should show omething of the love of Christ. Offer-ng a cup of cold water in the name of disciple. Helping, educating, reform-ng, because the Cross of Christ is rected in the midst of the world.

Dr. Stob, if you share this opinion and I have begun to believe you do), hy shouldn't you help to drive out the ectarian spirit which is still the actual r impending danger for the Christian abour movement on this continent? he movement never has had the aim b be just a shelter for believers but to ct as a disciple and missionary in the orld of labour. Other bodies, such as n American Labor Institute, or a Men's ociety, or a Study Group, may choose s their aim to study the labour prob-m from a certain point of view identi-al with their confession, or to act as witness in non-Christian labour unions s does the Association of Catholic rade Unionists. The Christian labour novement has another, or rather a wider ield of action. Its existence does not xclude these other types of organiza-ions, nor do these organizations ex-lude the CLAC.

In Germany there are the Evangelical and the Catholic workers' organizations to keep the religious fires burning among the workers, as was done in Holland for a long time by "Patrimonium" and is still being done by the "Gereformeerd Sociaal Verbond," but the Christian labour movement works beside them and wants to go into the labour problem itself to bring another spirit about in organized labour and, in doing so, to prepare for relations in industry which are more in accordance with the Christian ethics which are the heritage of our whole Western, our whole Christian world. This is being done not only in the Netherlands, but in Germany, in France, in Switzerland and even in Asia and Africa. With some 5 million members, the Christian labour movement is covering more ground every year, so that — and this proves its non-sectarian spirit — an Israeli labour movement with 100,000 members is seeking affiliation with the international Christian labour movement, because it says that the faith of its believing members has a better safeguard in it than in the International Federation of Free Trade Unions to which the AFL and CIO belong.

If the labour unions of Christian non-sectarian spirit sound a clear note of fellowship with the laboring man, to help carry his burden, the eyes may gradually be opened of those among them who now think and believe that the Christian message is of no avail for the working man.

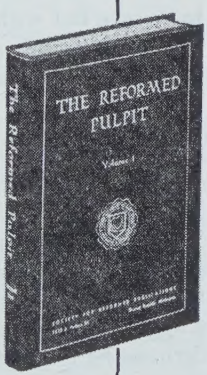
F. P. FUYKSCHOT
General Secretary
Christian Labour Association
of Canada

Hamilton, Ontario

SIRS:

Through force of circumstances I have come to live far from our Christian Reformed center. This has its disadvantages. However, it has also its advantages. One acquires a certain perspective and, too, one senses things, if not necessarily better, at least differently.

It has been, so it seems to me, as regards a recent happening among us. On Monday morning, Dec. 3, my pastor, the Rev. Henry Radius, informed me over the telephone that Dr. Henry Zylstra had collapsed and died on a



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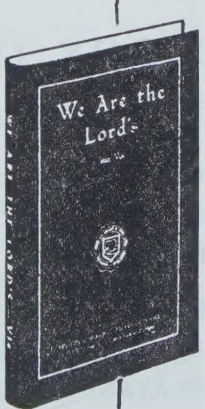

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street corner in Amsterdam. I was as if thunderstruck. Zylstra dead? I have wrestled with that thought ever since. Zylstra dead. In the prime of life. At the height of his powers. One of our ablest men. In a department that just could not spare him. A choice soul. A man who had been severely disciplined, though not soured, by a life filled with trials and disappointments, ready now to give his best, a very choice best.

Of course, the most poignant loss is that of the wife and children. A devastating loss. I am reminded of the passing of Dr. Martin Batts, a dozen years ago. Then as now one was confronted with much the same questions. Then as now one prayed especially for the widow, that her faith might fail her not. But, one can scarcely fail asking, is Calvin's not the greater loss?

Dr. Timmerman, Zylstra's colleague and close friend, in a moving contribution to the Calvin College *Chimes* of Dec. 7 said,

"He would have had an honorable place on any American college campus . . . Who can recount his services unmoved? The benefactors have many voices. The student whose life he decisively influenced — even into choosing a career, the fledgling writers whose efforts he painstakingly aided, the baffled boy whose problem he untangled, the despondent colleague whom he cheered, the many audiences whom he charmed, the varied committees whom he served, the readers whose vision he widened — we are all benefited."

This is well said.

And now what shall one say more? Question the love, the mercy, the wisdom of God? May He forbid. We confess we do not and can not understand. Not yet fifty. With at least two decades and more before him what might Zylstra not have achieved for the College he loved and the Church to which he was loyal. Surely, this loss of one of our choicest scholars and teachers has meaning for Calvin and the Church to which it belongs whether we do or do not discern it.

It was true of Zylstra as it is true of all teachers, that students are always far more impressed by what the teacher is than by what he says. He would, I am sure, have assented to the lines of Arthur Guiterman who once said:

"Mark Hopkins sat on one end of a log
And a farm boy sat on the other.
Mark Hopkins came as a pedagogue
And taught as an elder brother.
I don't care what Mark Hopkins taught,
If his Latin was small and his Greek was naught,
For the farmer boy he thought, thought he,
All through lecture time and quiz,
"The kind of a man I mean to be
Is the kind of a man Mark Hopkins is." . . . .

No printed word nor spoken plea
Can teach young hearts what men should be,
Not all the books on all the shelves,
But what the teachers are, themselves.
For Education is, Making Men;
So is it now, so was it when
Mark Hopkins sat on one end of a log
And James Garfield sat on the other."

I fear that some of our people, almost morbidly fearful of praising men, even the memory of outstanding men, may think that Zylstra has been overpraised. Esteeming mere human beings too highly is always a danger, a danger that must be guarded against. There is, however, also another danger, the danger that we do not sufficiently appreciate God's gift to us in the lives of certain men.

In repose Zylstra's face was grave. He was not given to unrestrained levity. But he could smile, a singularly beautiful smile. I shall remember him not with a face a bit too grave but with that charming smile. I shall remember him as one who feared God and loved to serve Him.

JOHANNES BROENE

SIRS:

Very disheartening was Rev. Verduin's article "Toward a Theistic Creationism," recently appearing in *The Reformed Journal.* Perhaps he did not intend it to do so, but the article certainly left me with the impress that we are one step, and a big o nearer to the teaching of evolutioni in our church. He created this impr sion not only by what he said, but a by the method in which he presen his material.

He begins the article by play down the "ictic" and building up "dimension of process" theory in cr tion and takes examples from Script to bring out his point. To the ext that Jesus did use water to make wi that He did use five loaves and t fishes to feed 5,000, and that God use dust to make man, I will agree w him. But I strongly believe that makes too much of his point, for "ictic" or "irruptive" is still pres in these mircles. It is a far cry fr water to wine; from five loaves a two fishes to satisfying 5,000 hun men, besides women and children; fr dust to a human being. But Rev. V duin would have us believe, perha that it is not so far? He can only so by overemphasizing the "process al" at the expense of the "ictic."

Note the "processional" method uses in his article, leading up his conclusion. He says, "As has b said already, man occurs at the of the progressive scale." In the lowing paragraph he says, "The q tion that finally confronts us is whe the Genesis account, which, as we h seen, incorporates the idea of pro and of progress, does also contain idea of exploitation of inherent po tial." He answers this a little l by saying, "The answer is again At each step Jehovah God exp inhering potential." Toward what clusion is Rev. Verduin building? comes a few paragraphs later where asks these leading questions: "God time took raw materials; raw, that

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n reference to the contemplated end ılt; but may He not have used as material for a later form that which stituted the finished product of an lier creative episode? Specifically, God use advanced forms of plant as raw material when He created -form animal life? And did He low-form animal life when He cre- l advanced-form animal life?"

Having led us thus far, and having pared our minds for the next ob- us question, why didn't Rev. Ver- n ask that question in precisely so ny words? Why didn't he ask, ıd did He use advanced-form animal when He created man?" Instead, asked a question so worded that y with difficulty can one lay hold the point he is making when he asks, ›intedly, was it 'primitive' dust out which God created man? Or was 'dust' already functioning in the sterious teamwork of forces that encounter wherever living tissue is?"

To this last question, the proper wer as I see it, is: He did not! In ıesis 2:7 we read: "And the Lord l formed man of the dust of the und and breathed into his nostrils breath of life; and man became a ng soul." Note that God *first* form- man of the dust of the ground and *y then* did He breath into his nos- s his breath of life. Rev. Verduin's ory would have us believe that man s formed out of "'dust' already func- ning in the mysterious teamwork of ces that we encounter wherever living ue is," that is, out of something ich possesses life. What is this some- ng? Are we to believe the obvious, indicated above, that man was crea- from "advanced-form animal life?" ıat are we to believe as to how far t animal life had advanced? To stage of the monkey? . . . .

Frankly, I see no difference between position and that of the theistic lutionist, except perhaps in matter degree. The evolutionist too would that God was the original creator, l by "processional" activity created means of growth, one living species m another over vast periods of time. v. Verduin's second from last para- ıph might seem to deny its possi- ity, but in my opinion he leaves op- rtunity to be persuaded that theistic lutionism is not to be entirely ruled t. As I said, his theory differs only degree from that of the evolutionist, it retains something yet of the tic" by requiring God to "create" as distinguished from "evolve" a new species from the next lower one already existing.

One further point I would like to make. In Rev. Verduin's article he makes much of the "dimension of process" theory in creation as opposed to the "ictic." This necessarily presupposes a great period of time if it is to be applied to creation and therefore requires that the word "day" when appearing in Genesis 1:5, 8 and 13 be taken to mean periods of time as opposed to 24-hour periods; or, that the "creation" of Genesis 1:1 took place ages before the creation of light on the first day in Genesis 1:3. In the many articles I have read, wherein the theory that the earth is hundreds of thousands, even millions of years old, the argument is invariably advanced that the word "day" is not limited to a 24-hour period during the first three days of creation, since the sun, moon and stars were not created until the fourth day; and only after that event are we to accept the 24-hour day. Yet in none of these articles have I ever read or seen mention made of the common meaning of the word "day" in the original tongue in which the Old Testament was written. May I ask, is the word "day" in the original as used in verses 5, 8 and 13 of Genesis 1 the same as that used in verses 19, 23 and 31 of chapter 1 and in verse 3 of Genesis 2? . . . .

In conclusion I would ask: Are there no ministers left in our denomination who still believe in creation as presented by the Bible? Is there none among the learned to take up the cudgel in the defense of the faith once delivered to the saints? Or has the Reformed persuasion become so enlightened that all must be explained away with "reason" and nothing accepted on faith? And what will be the next doctrine to fall because it cannot be explained by reason?

Sincerely yours,

B. E. BRUNE

Staten Island, N. Y.

REPLY

As to the assertion that I "play the ictic down. . . . over-emphasizing the processional at the expense of the ictic" I must say that I am somewhat disappointed. I thought I had made it completely plain that any partiality between these two is bad. That the one must not be allowed to cancel out the other I have said as plainly as I am able to say it; more words will not help. Can it be, Mr. Brune, that your theology is so much in the signature of the ictic that it views a balanced statement with alarm as a "playing down the ictic"?

When our correspondent says "I see no difference between his position and that of the theistic evolutionist" I am again disappointed; for I thought I had made it quite plain that I reject evolutionism, theistic or otherwise. May I say that the formulation of that excellent scientist and devout Christian, Dr. J. Lever, pleases me completely, namely, that regardless of just what the raw material was that God took to hand when He created the first man there stands at the beginning of human existence a supernatural and mysterious working of the creative power of God. If that is not plain then I do not know how to make it plain that I wish to be known as a creationist and not as an evolutionist.

As to Mr. Brune's plaintive question "Is there none. . . . to take up the cudgel in the defense of the faith once delivered to the saints"? may I reply with gratitude to God, and therefore with all humility, that the man whose signature appears below is ready to spend and be spent in precisely that venture?

With Christian greetings,

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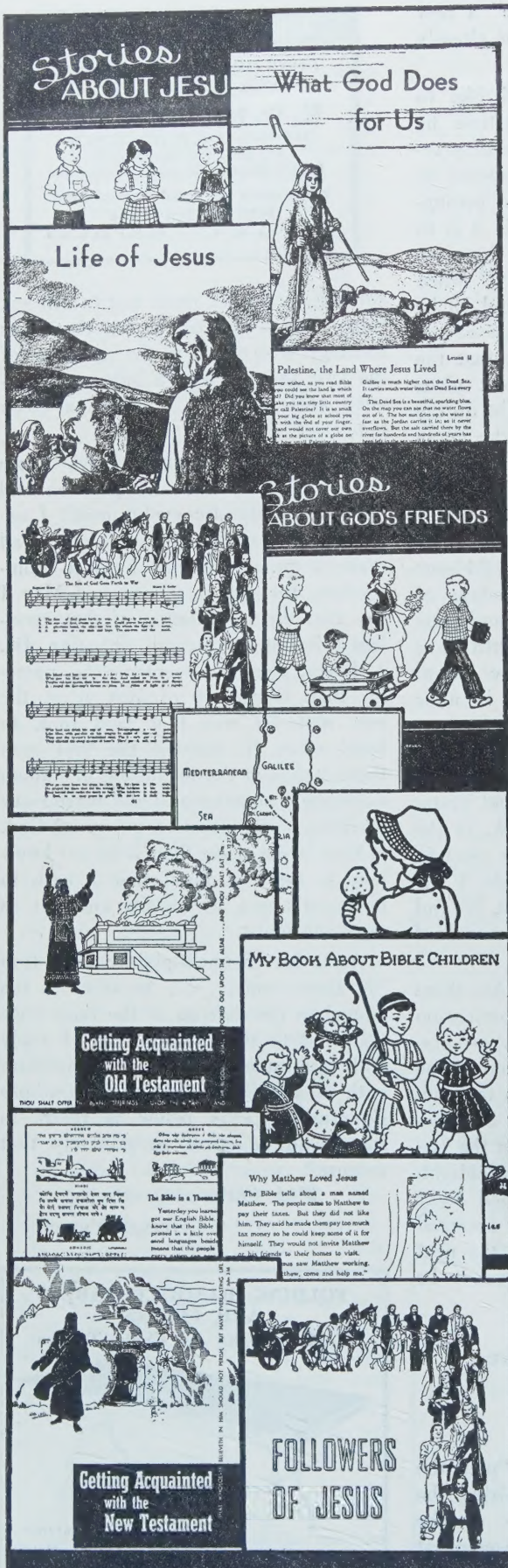
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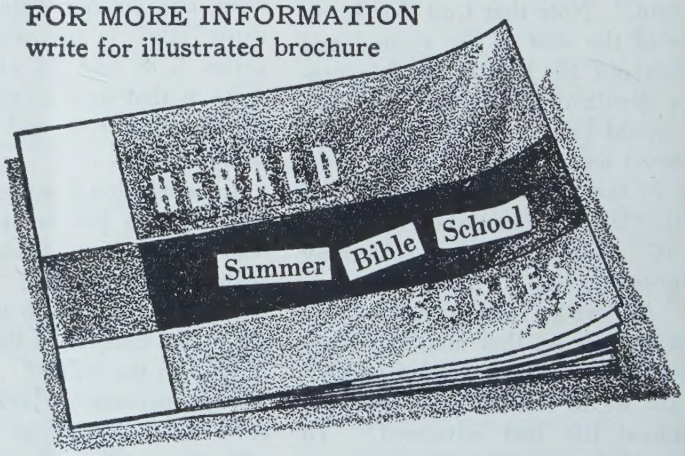

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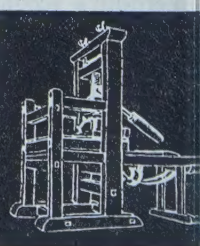

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